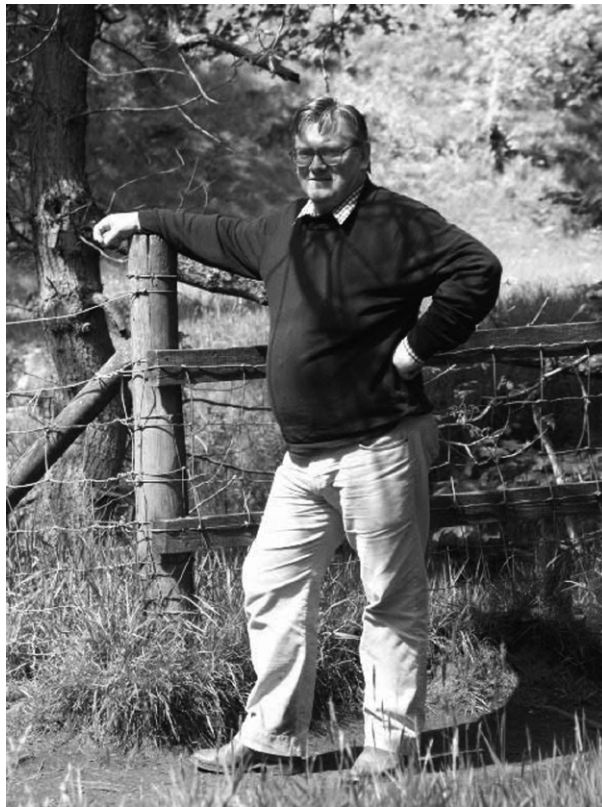


A. D. M. Phillips, 1944–2017^{*}



Tony Phillips died suddenly at his home in Cheshire on 2 November 2017, aged 73. Born and mostly brought up in Manchester, though spending some of his boyhood in Essex, he proceeded from Sale Grammar School to the Geography Department of University College London in 1962. In a department presided over by Henry Clifford Darby with several other luminaries of the sub-discipline among its teaching staff, the young Phillips readily succumbed to the delights of historical geography. Darby's thematic, landscape-evolutionary approach influenced Tony profoundly. It laid the foundations of his own teaching both to generations of Keele undergraduates and to those attending his popular continuing education courses. His UCL

^{*} The author wishes to thank Hugh Clout and Phil Kivell for their helpful comments on an earlier draft. Photograph courtesy Department of Geography, Keele University.

doctoral research, supervised by Hugh Prince with additional advice from F. M. L. Thompson, looked beyond clearing the wood and draining the fen to a theme suggested but as yet little explored by Darby, the underdraining of the clays. The book that eventually emerged, *The underdraining of farmland in England during the nineteenth century* (1989), combined data on the loan capital raised under state legislation with that on private funding derived from all the available estate records of three sample counties to produce national estimates, which, though conjectural, are unlikely to be superseded, of the proportion of drainage-impeded land underdrained during the second half of the nineteenth century. Total capital outlay, Tony suggested, was comparable with that spent on English parliamentary enclosure.

In 1968, Tony was appointed to a lectureship in historical geography at Keele University. Subsequently promoted reader, he was to remain there for his entire career, retiring, though not ceasing to supervise, teach or research, in 2010. A relatively small department, as Keele's was for much of Tony's time there, demands of its staff adaptability in what they teach and a willingness to assume diverse administrative responsibilities. While accepting both of these exigencies with good grace, Tony allowed neither to impede the pursuit of his own research interests. These advanced on a broad front. In the seventies, several papers on French agriculture were co-authored with his UCL contemporary, Hugh Clout. County and regional historical journals became outlets for numerous papers on nineteenth-century English agriculture, each typically exploiting a distinct source – tithe surveys, cropping books, estate papers more generally – to explore different features of agrarian change. Papers in the *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (1979) and the *Industrial Archaeology Review* (1979–80) even revisited the subject of Tony's undergraduate dissertation, the agricultural reclamation of Cheshire mosslands as a solution to the problems posed by the disposal of Manchester's waste.

While Barcelona, the venue for many Keele student field trips, was a favourite city and he was briefly a visiting lecturer at York University Toronto, Tony was not greatly given to wanderlust. Having settled at Keele and made his home across the Cheshire Plain, first at Tarporley, where he is buried, then at Maesfen to the north of Whitchurch, it came naturally to him that his 'home counties', Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire, would be at the forefront of his scholarly activity. Some of this may have been happenstance. The Reports to the Inclosure Commissioners by Andrew Thompson, agent to the Keele estate, loom large in the published output from the ESRC-funded project on landlord investment in farm buildings because, as it turned out, they were the only such reports to have survived. Much of it arose because Tony's instinctive readiness to think of new projects cast him as lead facilitator of regional-historical publishing. Though his propensity to initiate occasionally outran his capacity to complete (an Aberystwyth colleague of mine long ago wrote off his contribution to a proposed book on Victorian Staffordshire), a large number of edited projects did materialise, beyond his editorship from 1970 to 1979 of the *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies*. They include a volume on the history of the Potteries, published to mark the Keele meeting of the British Association in 1993, the festschrift for Stanley Beaver co-edited with Brian Turton (1975), attractively produced historical atlases of Cheshire (2002) and Staffordshire (2011) co-edited with Colin Phillips, and the festschrift for Michael Greenslade co-edited with Philip Morgan and published by the Staffordshire Record Society (1997). The Society's *Collections* series served as

conduit for several Phillips projects. The edition of Gregory King's surveys of Staffordshire on which Tony was working in the months before his death may be a future volume.

Tony was elected to the British Agricultural History Society's executive committee in 1973 and remained a member of it for more than thirty years. During that time, he chaired the committee, organised numerous winter and several spring conferences, and served first as book reviews editor, then from 1994 to 1998 as editor of the *Review*.

Tony was generous, out-going and fun to be with. His *aperçus* could be both astute and witty. His enthusiasms were many and varied. It saddens me to think that my memory of his unique, infectious laughter will fade and I have no recording. But each time I take the road that leads from Ellesmere past Whitchurch and on towards Warrington, noting the area's substantial brick-built steadings and productive, well-drained farmland, I shall be thinking of Tony at home, just over there, working on the things he loved, living a life he loved.

John R. Walton